

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 SSM-03 /093 W
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P R 240800Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8408
DIA WASHDC//
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE//J2 & EUDAC
USEUCOM AIDES VAIHINGEN GERMANY
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA//CODE 20
CINCSAC OFFUTT AFB NE
CINCSAC INTEL CTR OFFUTT AFB NE
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE//AEAGB-C (CM)
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK//N-2
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GE//INOCN
CINCUSAFE LINDSEY AS GE//INCF
TFC BOERFINK MTK GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3503

NOFORN

THIS IS A JOINT STATE-DEFENSE MESSAGE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, LE, IS, PLO
SUBJ: LEBANESE ISRAELI NAVAL ENCOUNTER
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REF: STATE 156572

1. SUMMARY: DATT SOURCE 6 857 0278, AN EXPERIENCED NAVAL
OBSERVER, ADVISED THAT LEBANESE NAVY PATROL CRAFT INTER-
CEPTED AND BEGAN ESCORT OF THE COASTAL FREIGHTER DIMITRIA
IN LEBANESE WATERS ON 18 JUN 78. UPON BEGINNING ESCORT NORTH,

THE LEBANESE CRAFT WAS FIRED UPON BY AN ISRAELI PATROL BOAT WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY TOOK OVER ESCORT OF THE DIMITRIA TO AN ISRAELI PORT. THE DIMITRIA WAS CARRYING CONTRABAND ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND CIGARETTES. END SUMMARY.

2. SOURCE MONITORED 18 JUNE INCIDENT FROM LAF NAVAL HQ OPERATIONS CENTER IN JUNIYAH. ON 22 JUNE HE DESCRIBED DETAILS OF INCIDENT TO DATT AS FOLLOWS:

A. ON 17 JUNE, LAF INTELLIGENCE RECEIVED INFO THAT A SHIPMENT OF CONTRABAND WOULD BE SENT TO TYRE AREA VIA CYPRUS ABOARD THE COASTAL FREIGHTER DIMITRIA FOLLOWING DAY. THE SOURCE SAID THAT TWO SIDON CLASS PATROL BOATS WERE SENT TO THE AREA WEST OF TYRE FOLLOWING DAY, AND AS SUSPECTED, ONE BOAT INTERCEPTED THE DIMITRIA IN LEBANESE WATERS SOUTH OF TYRE DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS. THE COASTAL FREIGHTER WAS STOPPED AND TOLD TO PROCEED NORTH IN COMPANY OF THE LAF PATROL. SOURCE SAID AN ISRAELI DABBUR CLASS PATROL CRAFT OBSERVED THE INTERCEPTION FROM APPROXIMATELY ONE MILE SOUTH. AS LEBANESE PATROL AND DIMITRIA BEGAN TO PROCEED NORTH, THE ISRAELI CRAFT CLOSED AND OPENED FIRE. THE LEBANESE RETURNER FIRE, MORE FROM FEAR THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THE SOURCE CLAIMED. THERE WAS SOME MINOR DAMAGE TO LEBANESE CRAFT AND THEY PROCEEDED OUT OF AREA. ISRAELI CRAFT WAS OBSERVED TO ESCORT DIMITRIA SOUTH TO ISRAELI TERRITORY.

B. SOURCE SAID THAT DIMITRIA'S CARGO CONSISTED OF 6,000
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CASES OF CIGARETTES AND 10,000 CASES OF WHISKEY. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS INCORRECT INFORMATION PUBLISHED AFTER INCIDENT THAT THE DIMITRIA WAS ALLOWED TO PROCEED TO SARAFAND AREA AFTER BEING SEARCHED IN HAIFA. THIS MISTAKE WAS CAUSED BY ANOTHER SHIP REPORTEDLY LANDING CONTRABAND AT SARAFAND AFTER THE INCIDENT, AND THE FALSE ASSUMPTION BY LAF INTELLIGENCE SOURCES THAT IT WAS THE DIMITRIA DISCHARGING ITS CARGO.

C. SOURCE SAID THAT THE DIMITRIA SOMEHOW LOST ITS WHISKEY CARGO TO THE ISRAELIS, BUT THAT IT WAS ALLOWED TO PROCEED TO SIDON WITH ITS CONTRABAND CIGARETTES. SOURCE SAID THE CIGARETTES WERE DISCHARGED IN SIDON 20-21 JUN AND HE HAD A LIST OF TYPES OF CIGARETTES. 2800 CASES MARLBOROS AND REMAINDER OF 6000 TOTAL COMPOSED OF KENTS, WINSTONS, LUCKY STRIKES, ETC. SOURCE SAID THAT CHIEF SMUGGLER IN SOUTH WAS A LEBANESE NAMED "PHAROAN" AND THAT HE COOPERATED WITH BOTH PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS. SOURCE BELIEVED THAT THIS PARTICULAR INCIDENT WAS INTELLIGENCE OPERATION WHICH LAF NAVY UNFORTUNATELY FOULED UP. SOURCE SAID THAT THERE ARE OCCASIONAL PERSONNEL TRANSFERS BETWEEN SMALL COASTAL SMUGGLER CRAFT AND ISRAELI PATROL CRAFT. HE CITED KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSFER OF THREE PALESTINIANS PRECEDING WEEK 12-16 JUN WHILE SMUGGLER CRAFT ESCORTED TO HAIFA.

D. SOURCE ALSO SAID THAT LAF NAVAL HQ CONTACTED THE ONE MAN THEY FELT COULD INTERVENE DIRECTLY WITH ISRAELIS DURING INCIDENT TO RETURN PRIZE TO LEBANESE, AND THAT WAS BASHIR GEMAYEL. SOURCE SAID THAT BASHIR TOLD HIM THAT HE HAD MADE CONTACT WITH ISRAELI AUTHORITIES AND REQUESTED RETURN OF DIMITRIA. SOURCE SAID THERE WAS NO HESITATION IN ISRAELI REMOVAL OF VESSEL, AND HE CONSIDERED BASHIR'S INTERVENTION FRUITLESS.

E. LAF NAVY HAD BEEN REGULARLY PATROLLING AS FAR SOUTH AS SIDON IN PAST WEEKS, SOURCE SAID, BUT NOW PATROLS HAVE BEEN STOPPED BECAUSE ISRAELIS OBVIOUSLY DON'T WANT LEBANESE IN AREA.

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(COMMENT: SOURCE WAS POSITIVE THAT THE DIMITRIA INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IN LEBANESE TERRITORIAL WATERS AND CLEARLY MARKED LEBANESE NAVY PATROL CRAFT WERE INVOLVED. SOURCE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT LEBANESE HAD DIMITRIA UNDER CONTROL WHEN ISRAELIS INTERVENED. WHILE EXACT DETAILS OF STORY DIFFER, LEBANESE NAVY OFFICERS FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY ISRAELI NAVY WOULD OPPOSE THEIR COASTAL SECURITY OPERATIONS.)

GDS - 31 DEC 84

PARKER

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